

Research Brief Grading of ELL students

Question: How can ELL students be graded in CORE classes?

Summary of Findings: One of the primary responsibilities of the high school is to get students to graduate with appropriate skills to be successful in their next step, whether it be to attend college or enter the work force. "A survey of state education agencies found that, in 2000-2001, more than 4 million students with limited proficiency in English were enrolled in public schools across the nation, making up almost 10 percent of the total pre-K through 12th grade public school enrollment" (English Language Learners). According to research, it takes four to seven years to master academic English and academic subjects. In February 2004, Rod Paige, Secretary of Education, put a provision in place in the No Child Left Behind Act, so that for those English Language Learners who have been enrolled in school for less than one year, may take an alternative English proficiency test instead of the English reading test. However, they must still take the mandated mathematics test. This puts enormous pressure on teachers to immerse students in English as quickly as possible and for ELLs to adjust to English and the culture with little to no transition time.

Grading work is one method that provides students with feedback to know how well they are doing in a course and for teachers to know how well their students are comprehending the material they have taught. In the literature, there was one recurring idea for the type of grading that appeared to be successful for high school ELLs and that was through portfolio assessment, where students compile their work and discuss their progress on an on-going and regular basis.

Major Findings and Conclusions:

General Characteristics that should be in place:

1. Provide timely assessment and feedback to the student. Have students use English and appropriate vocabulary as much as is feasible.
2. Closely monitor academic growth. Provide assignments that cover the same content that is being done in class, but with modifications to help them realistically stretch but not be frustrated or overwhelmed.
3. Provide a high quality instructional program that presents the content in meaningful contexts.
4. Use a wide variety of pedagogy, with an emphasis on the use of realia and authentic hands-on activities that will allow students to utilize the language and concept in context.
5. Supply appropriate and adequate teacher support through on-going staff development and support personnel, preferably those who speak the specific home



language of the students.

6. Provide sufficient resources and materials.

Suggested ideas for helping students develop literacy within a content:

1. Vocabulary: Create meaningful contexts so the students can correctly use the words in reading and writing, as well as develop depth in the content and language.
2. Text: Break the text into "chunks," use illustrations and other context clues, conduct discussions about the concept and what was read, and teach the different structures as they naturally occur in the text.
3. Reading: Whenever possible, use multicultural material, provide background about the reading, especially if it deals with a concept from the dominant culture with which the students may be unfamiliar or have little to no background.
4. Writing: Teach writing as a process, teach conventions within an appropriate context, and teach writing and its specific conventions and vocabulary in all content areas.
5. Inquiry: Teach the content through authentic and meaningful engagement where the students can use the concepts and vocabulary, and provide opportunities for students to do collaborative work on projects.

For more information on meeting the needs of ELL students, see the brief on this site entitled: Inclusion and ELL students.

Online Resources:

- A National Study of School Effectiveness for Language Minority Students' Long-Term Academic Achievement
This is a summary of a long term study on the academic achievement of English Language Learners from districts in Maine, Texas, and Oregon.

http://www.crede.ucsc.edu/research/liaa/1.1_es.html

- ELLs and U.S. Schools
A brief explanation of the challenges ELL students face when developing English language literacy.

http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/about/lieps/3_schools.html

- English-Language Learners
A description of the different perspectives of English immersion and bilingual programs is provided. According to this article, there does not seem to be conclusive evidence that one way is better than another.

<http://www.edweek.org/rc/issues/english-language-learners/>

- English Language Learners: Boosting Academic Achievement

<http://www.educationpartnerships.org/>



Definitions of and suggestions for helping ELL students gain literacy is given.

Although part of this article looks at early elementary aged students, it offers strong ideas for helping students develop content literacy skills. Access this from this site.

<http://www.edweek.org/rc/issues/english-language-learners/>

- English Language Learners with Special Needs: Effective Instructional Strategies
This article cites components that need to be in place in a school's culture so that the needs of every student can be successfully met.

<http://www.cal.org/ericcll/digest/0108ortiz.html>

- Fostering Academic Success for English Language Learners: What Do We Know?
Misconceptions that Cloud the Discussion
This succinct article cites some common misconceptions about teaching a child English.

<http://www.wested.org/policy/pubs/fostering/misconceptions.htm>

- Fostering Academic Success for English Language Learners: What Do We Know?
A review of the components that make for a successful school climate for English Language Learning is described here.

<http://www.wested.org/policy/pubs/fostering/inventory.htm>

- Fostering Academic Success for English Language Learners: Types of Instructional Program Models

A definition of different types of programs for ELL students is described here.

<http://www.wested.org/policy/pubs/fostering/models.htm>

- General Principles for Teaching ELL Students

Numerous strategies and ideas about meeting the needs of ELL students are in this article.

<http://www.nwrel.org/request/2003may/general.html>

- How long does it take an English learner to attain proficiency?

Findings from studies done on how long ELL students need ESL and bilingual education are summarized in this article.

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/el/>

- In the Classroom: Grade level content: 7-12/Secondary

This article provides a brief description of major components of literacy across the content areas and ways to help ELL students gain literacy. It provides suggestions and different strategies to assist in several areas.

<http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/practice/itc/secondary.html>

- Language Learning and Academic Achievement

<http://www.educationpartnerships.org/>



A list of research sites and many different aspects of learning English as a another language is provided in this article.

<http://www.crede.ucsc.edu/research/lala/lala.html>

- No Child Left Behind Act: Now What Do We Need to do to be Culturally Responsive?

An overview of issues to consider when working with students from cultures other than the dominant one are explored in this article. In addition to non-English speaking cultures, there is an heavy emphasis on African-American culture.

<http://www.wm.edu/ttac/articles/legal/nowwhat.htm>

- Types of Language Instruction Educational Programs

Basic description of the different structures for ELL programs is provided in easy to read chart form.

http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/about/lieps/4_desc.html

- U.S., District Reach Settlement on English-Language Learners

A brief description of a legal decision in New Jersey about the type of support ELL students should have in the school system is offered.

<http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2004/09/22/04fed-2.h24.html>

Schools:

- Burley Senior High School

This article highlights some inclusive strategies that are used by a few teachers in this school's setting.

<http://www.nwrel.org/request/2003may/burley.html>

- Ontario High School

A description of EDL, Core Content in Spanish, Sheltered English, and Content with Sheltered English are included here.

<http://www.nwrel.org/request/2003may/ontario.html>

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